

## Supporting the Coop Preschool Teacher

The teacher is a crucial component of a healthy cooperative preschool. Keeping a teacher for several years benefits the school by providing continuity and stability. Advantages of keeping a teacher over the long term include: people who enroll know what to expect; enrollment stays up; community support increases; and a connection with public school resources and support is maintained. A teacher experienced with the school can also educate new members in the school's educational philosophy. Supporting the teaching staff is one of the board's primary responsibilities.

### I. The Supportive Board.

#### A. Consideration

1. Encourage parents to communicate with the teacher when concerns arise.
2. Keep the best interests of the children in mind.
3. Remember that it is impossible to please everyone all of the time.
4. Recognize that not every school is a fit for every family.
5. Trust the teacher's judgment.

#### B. Communication.

1. Meet during the summer.
2. Take time to understand your teacher's personality.
3. Be honest and up front so problems resolve more easily.
4. Share strengths and weaknesses and see where you compliment each other's abilities.
5. Communicate problems and brainstorm ideas together.
6. Advocate for the teaching staff with the school's membership.

#### C. Appreciation.

1. Encourage the teacher verbally.
2. Leave thoughtful written notes for the teacher.
3. Surprise the teacher with day-brightening treats.

### II. Professional Consideration for the Teacher

#### A. Recognize the teacher as a professional.

1. Respect the teacher's personal life and be careful about infringing on family or personal time.
2. Allocate an area for the teacher's private space and respect that space as hers alone.
3. Consult the teacher before rearranging any school areas, especially storage areas.
4. Pay the teacher for work outside the classroom. Parent education presentations, clean-up, phone calls, home visits, special projects, help on fundraising and extra meetings should be recognized as extra and compensated accordingly.
5. Negotiate teacher salary before finalizing other budget decisions.

#### B. Recognize the teacher as a leader in your coop team.

1. Remember that every year the teacher has a new set of "bosses." Therefore the teacher must always adapt to the needs and personalities of ever changing members.
2. Work with the teacher's strengths; one person cannot be all things.
3. Arrange for one member to be a teacher liaison to support the teacher with a trusted, discreet and non-judgmental ear.
4. The President should meet at least once a month with the teacher.
  - a. Check the board meeting agenda together.
  - b. Keep each other updated on all school happenings.
  - c. Keep uncomfortable surprises from occurring.

#### C. Provide Opportunities for Professional Development.

1. Maintain a personnel folder (typically including copies of up to date letters of recommendations, merit scale worksheets, contracts, resumes and certificates of continuing education classes). Teachers should periodically review their personnel file.
2. Provide substitutes for PCPO teacher meetings, workshops and visits to schools in session.
3. Encourage the teacher to connect with other PCPO teachers.
4. Provide funds for OAEYC membership or other professional organization.
5. Make it possible for your teacher to attend workshops and classes.
6. Discuss current educational practices with your teacher.